

Attachment 1

Hacked e-mails reveal plans for dirty-tricks campaign against U.S. Chamber foes

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A feud between a security contracting firm and a group of guerrilla computer hackers has spilled over onto K Street, as stolen e-mails reveal plans for a dirty-tricks-style campaign against critics of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The tale began this month when a global hackers collective known as Anonymous broke into the computers of HBGary Federal, a California security firm, and dumped tens of thousands of internal company e-mails onto the Internet.

The move was in retaliation for assertions by HBGary Federal chief executive Aaron Barr that he had identified leaders of the hackers' group, which has actively supported the efforts of anti-secrecy Web site WikiLeaks to obtain and disclose classified documents.

The e-mails revealed, among other things, a series of often-dubious counterintelligence proposals aimed at enemies of Bank of America and the chamber. The proposals included distributing fake documents and launching cyber-attacks.

The chamber has adamantly denied any knowledge of the "abhorrent" proposals, including some contained in a sample blueprint outlined for Hunton & Williams, a law and lobbying firm that works for the chamber. The business group said in a statement Monday that the proposal "was not requested by the Chamber, it was not delivered to the Chamber and it was never discussed with anyone at the Chamber."

Two other security firms named in the e-mails, Berico Technologies and Palantir Technologies, also have issued statements distancing themselves from the plans. HBGary Federal and Hunton & Williams declined to comment.

The hacked e-mails suggest that the three security firms worked with Hunton & Williams in hopes of landing a \$2 million contract to assist the chamber. Some of the e-mails, which were highlighted by the liberal Web site ThinkProgress on Monday, seem to suggest that the chamber had been apprised of the efforts. The chamber denied any such knowledge.

On Nov. 16, for example, Barr suggests in an e-mail to Berico that his company had spoken "directly" to the chamber despite the lack of a signed contract.

Other e-mails describe Hunton & Williams lawyer Bob Quackenboss as the "key client contact operationally" with the chamber and make references to a demonstration session that had "sold the Chamber in the first place."

On Dec. 1, a Palantir engineer summarized a meeting with Hunton & Williams, saying the law firm "was looking forward to briefing the results to the Chamber to get them to pony up the cash for Phase II." The proposed meeting was set to take place this past Monday, according to the e-mail.

"While many questions remain in the unfolding ChamberLeaks controversy, what's clear is that this multitude of emails clearly contradicts the Chamber's claim that they were 'not aware of these proposals until HBGary's e-mails leaked,' " ThinkProgress reporter Scott Keyes wrote in a blog post.

One Nov. 29 e-mail contains presentations and memos outlining how a potential counterintelligence program against chamber critics might work. The documents are written under the logo of Team Themis, which was the joint project name adopted by the three technology firms.

Several of the documents focus on ChamberWatch, a union-backed organization that criticizes the business lobby and many of its members. The documents include personal details about activists who work for the group and suggestions for targeting its reputation, including planting fake documents, tying the organization to radical activists or creating "fake insider personas" on social media.

ChamberWatch, one memo said, is "vulnerable to information operations that could embarrass the organization and those associated with it."

Christy Setzer, a ChamberWatch spokeswoman, said that "even if the chamber was not aware of these specific proposals, they were clearly aware of the work that was being done."

The chamber disagreed and singled out ThinkProgress for allegedly organizing a "smear campaign" similar to unproven allegations last year that the business group used foreign money in its domestic political activities.

"The leaked e-mails appear to show that HBGary was willing to propose questionable actions in an attempt to drum up business, but the Chamber was not aware of these proposals until HBGary's e-mails leaked," the chamber's statement said.

Palantir chief executive Alex Karp, a self-described progressive, said in a statement Monday that the Silicon Valley software firm had severed ties with HBGary Federal and placed on leave an engineer involved in the project pending a review.

"Palantir does not make software that has the capability to carry out the offensive tactics proposed by HBGary," Karp said. "Palantir never has and never will condone the sort of activities recommended by HBGary."

Berico's co-founders, Guy Filippelli and Nick Hallam, said in a statement Friday that they also had severed ties with HBGary Federal and had launched an internal investigation into the affair.

"Our leadership does not condone or support any effort that proactively targets American firms, organizations or individuals," the executives said, adding that such proposals "run counter to our organization's values."